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ABSTRACT

In 1991, the Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) Program consisted of projects in 31 states; a total of $7.4 million was available to these projects. The projects provided instruction in basic and life skills, further assisted homeless adults through counseling and life planning activities, and coordinated efforts with other homeless adult-serving programs. AEH served over 34,000 adult learners, a 10,000 participant (42 percent) increase over the previous year. Although service to male students was predominant in a number of states, almost half of the learners were women. The racial/ethnic makeup of participants remained fairly constant: the largest group of learners were White, 41 percent were African American, and 11 percent were Hispanic. Services to Native Americans increased. Among the 25 states reporting student ages, those aged 25-44 represented 60 percent of learners, the age 16-24 group 29 percent, and the 45-59 age range 10 percent. Approximately 1,000 learners achieved a high school diploma, almost 2,000 made the transition from basic skills instruction to higher education and occupational training, and over 3,000 found or improved employment. Improved quality of life was indicated by participants who found housing, were removed from public assistance, developed personal education goals, or improved parenting skills. The report concludes with recommendations to local programs, state projects, and the national program. (YLB)

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ADULTS IN TRANSITION
A Report of the Fourth Year of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program

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Division of Adult Education and Literacy
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education
May 1993

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"When I think about what [the AEH program] means to me, I think of a child at Christmas looking in a toy store window and dreaming of what Santa could bring her. Well, [this program] is my toy store. When I came here, I began to see a path to dreams I've had. But I am different from that child at the window. I have the chance to go in and pick out what I want, and actually bring it home. I have my GED, I am in college, and I am on the way to my goals in life..."

(Marion L., learner in Rhode Island's Traveler's Aid AEH program from her valedictorian speech, GED graduation ceremony, 1991)

"Many of the homeless students involved with the (AEH) programs are seen as beyond the help of traditional education systems because of their transient living situations, chemical dependency issues and low sense of self worth.

Adult education provides a context for homeless learners to see where their lives may be leading and the potential results of their actions. Learners respond to activities which relate to the real world in which they live. [...] Exposing homeless learners to resources and group support enlarges their world, gives them hope and moves them from being victims to taking active steps toward self-improvement. It increases their interest in the future and helps them plan for it.

The Adult Education Program for the Homeless is teaching [providers and learners] that homeless adults have skills, opportunities and a future."

Excerpted from the Washington State Program External Evaluation by Patti McLaughlin

INTRODUCTION

In 1991 the Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) Program consisted of projects in thirty-one states. The general purposes of the AEH projects were to provide instruction in basic and life skills, to further assist homeless adults through counseling and life planning activities, and to coordinate efforts with other homeless adult-serving programs (shelter, job training, etc.).

Projects were funded on a competitive basis to the following states: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. A total of $7.4 million was available for these projects, about the same amount as in the third year.

The findings of this report are based on year-end performance reports from twenty- eight (90%) of the thirty-one states (data was not received from Georgia, New Jersey, and Vermont). Recommendations were developed from state report data and from DAEL staff investigations.

For further information on the Adult Education for the Homeless Program, or to comment on this report, contact: James Parker or Melissa Morrill, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, US Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202-7240.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS LEARNERS

The National AEH Program served over 34,000 adult learners in its fourth year. This represents a 10,000 participant (42%) increase compared with the previous year. Eleven states each provided service to over one thousand students.

MEN AND WOMEN

A 25-year old high school graduate, reading at a fifth grade level, wanted to take Nurse's Aide training. The local program assisted her in enrolling in adult high school and applying to the Job Training Partnership Act program for tuition payment.

A 38-year-old male has been working as a dishwasher for 22 years. He wants to become a cook but cannot read. After attending tutoring sessions at the Adult Learning Center, he can now read the menu and order tickets where he works. He is also using the computer spelling program at the Center which has greatly improved his spelling ability. He now feels very hopeful about his future.

A young couple with four children returned to the shelter ... They were both very motivated to return to school and increase their employability and income. At the same time a local church group was looking for a motivated family who wanted help in building their resources. The couple is now working closely with the church group to realize their educational and employment goals.

While service to male students was predominant in a number of states (Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, North Carolina, and Rhode Island), almost half of our learners were women. This represents a major increase over the 1990 program. Twelve states served a majority of women in 1991, as indicated below.

STATE	% OF LEARNERS WHO WERE WOMEN	STATE	% OF LEARNERS WHO WERE WOMEN
Oklahoma	100%	Michigan	57%
West Virginia	97%	Ohio	57%
Kansas	69%	Montana	55%
Colorado	61%	Minnesota	55%
Massachusetts	60%	Pennsylvania	52%
Kentucky	58%	Missouri	52%

THE RACES OF LEARNERS

A 44-year old homeless, Mexican-American male with a 14-year old son wanted help. He had only a second grade education and could not read or write English and had taken his son out of school to help him find housing and employment. Through the efforts of the program coordinator and shelter staff, the son is back at school, -and the father has obtained full time employment as a grounds keeper. He plans to enroll in the ESL program through the local school district.

A 26-year old African-American woman, homeless, ex-offender with 2 children entered the shelter. Initially she was not interested [in the AEH program, but] ... gradually the program coordinator gained her trust. Now this mother is working very hard to improve her parenting and communication skills. One particular chore she picked to do at the shelter has worked to increase her self-esteem; she helped make dinner for the 28 shelter residents. Through this experience she realized she has a talent for cooking large quantities of food, and is now seeking part-time employment as a cook or cook's assistant. She also plans to attend college.

The racial/ethic makeup of participants has remained fairly constant over the years. The largest group of learners in Year 4 were White, 41% were African American, and 11% were Hispanic. Four percent were American Indian and only one percent were Asian.

States where African Americans made up a large proportion of learners include:

California - 36%	Massachusetts - 35%	Michigan - 65%
New York - 60%	Delaware - 73%	Mississippi - 51%
Missouri - 51%	North Carolina - 57%	Ohio - 53%

Only three states served relatively large numbers of Hispanics: California with 724, Nevada with 201, and New York with 806.

Services to Native Americans increased in Year 4. Of the 1033 Native Americans enrolled, Washington State served the greatest number...488. California served 104, Montana - 78, North Dakota - 62, Kansas - 42, Ohio - 35, Missouri - 35 and North Carolina - 30. No other state project enrolled more that 26 Native Americans.

STUDENT AGES

A 27 year-old mother of six children, recovering from substance abuse, regained custody of her children and moved into low income housing upon leaving the shelter. She is currently attending a local vocational school and her children are attending school. The entire family participates in the Learning Center's family activities on a regular basis.

A man in his early 50's came to the shelter after losing his housing due to state budget cuts. While he was receiving general assistance he searched for employment but could not find work. During the interview with the AEH project coordinator, he revealed that he had been fired for poor attendance after working with an auto company for 24 years. His poor attendance was caused by medical problems. He was a veteran, so the project coordinator helped him to fill out the paperwork for Social Security and informed him he was eligible for free medical services at the VA hospital.

Among the 25 states reporting student ages, the 25 - 44 years of age range represents 60% of learners.

Many states also serve proportionally large numbers of young adults (age 16 - 24):

STATE	NUMBER OF YOUNG ADULTS
Ohio	986
New York	889
California	641
Missouri	625
Indiana	578
Arkansas	571
Washington	445
Michigan	429
Kentucky	396
Kansas	300
Minnesota	220

The young adult group made up 29% of all students in 1991.

Many fewer adults over age 45 are served by the AEH Program; only ten percent in the 45 - 59 age range, and only one percent over 60 years of age. However, five states have provided services to a somewhat greater number of seniors:

Arkansas - 37 Missouri - 35 New York - 40

North Carolina - 31 Ohio - 48

THE TRANSITIONS

"Just as the Clinton Administration relied on a transition team to develop new leadership in the government, so do adult education agencies need to help develop their own brand of transition team to help move students from dependency...to self-sufficiency and independence." Adult Learning, May, 1993

"I wanted to help people climb up the ladder out of homelessness. [...] You have to do the things yourself if you're going to expect your clients to do it. You can't be telling them to go back to school if you aren't. It has really made a difference to me personally. It's a slow process, but someone helped me and so I wanted to help someone else. "

(a formerly homeless youth mentor in the Minnesota project)

"To me success is [based upon] having the basic skills to compete in the everyday world. I had never learned these basic skills in my 34 years until coming to Turn About and participating in the programs that are offered here. I had been incarcerated for 12 years and was released with absolutely no confidence in myself or my chances of gaining meaningful employment. I have now been employed for a year and 4 months. I thought I was a hopeless case [but] the staff at [the AEH project] gave me every tool and attention I asked for. They were aware of my situation and, without prejudice, made me feel and realize that I am an asset to the community. I am proud of myself and what I accomplished. I will never forget the training I have learned nor will I ever forget the love and caring I received from the [AEH project] staff. Still today they are my friends ... I will always be theirs."

(a learner in the Sioux Falls, South Dakota project)

High School Diplomas

Daisy, an outpatient ... and former resident [at a local domestic violance and sexual assault center], started GED classes [with the AEH program] and eventually passed the GED test and received her certificate. She had been out of school for seven years and had three pre-school age children. ... after receiving her GED she enrolled at Cameron University. She is currently completing her first semester and is a nursing student as well as a work study employee at the University. Through educational counseling by AEH program staff, Daisy was able to apply for and receive grants to assist toward her degree and has even been able to buy a used car for her transportation.

In December of 1990 Fatima, who is blind, was a beginning ESL student at Martin House. She continued to work on her English, although she was preoccupied with an impending court case in which she was a plaintiff. Once she mastered enough English to speak to the judge, her legal problems were over. In late July, Fatima moved from Martin House into her own apartment. Presently she is buying furniture, doing her own shopping, and serving on the Board of Directors of the local chapter of the Federation of the Blind. She has been studying ESL with new intensity. Her plan, once she finishes the three remaining lessons, is to learn advanced Braille and the arithmetic code. Her long term goal is to study for the GED.

Each year a relatively small, but significant number of homeless adults (approximately 1000) achieve a major milestone in their lives - a high school diploma. Given the conditions under which these learners live, it is somewhat amazing that this major accomplishment occurs at all. States which lead the nation in 1991 are Arkansas (91 graduates), Colorado (59), Kentucky (83), New York (64), Ohio (103), Pennsylvania (62), and Washington State (59).

Training and Education

"Everything takes time. For me, getting things to go the way I want them to in my life ... [can be frustrating] and sometimes I want to give up. But when I stick with it and make it successful it feels that much better because I saw it through and I was the one who made it work."

"[My tutor] challenged me and told me, 'You can do it' when I wasn't so sure. This is the best thing I've ever done for myself; I need this program -- it gives me structure, and when I'm doing my school work, I'm not thinking about going off and getting high. I want to do this for me. Getting my GED will be nice of course, but this is something I can do for myself. I got my first A ever here. I still have the paper! In fact, I now have a collection of my A papers and I am going to keep them all because I am proud of them."

(learners in the Massachusetts project)

In the 24 states reporting such data, almost 2000 adult education students made the transition form basic skills instruction to higher education and occupational training. This is encouraging, since often the pursuit of further training or education is the critical factor in assuring a long-tern transition to self-sufficiency.

Employment

Donald is a Vietnam Veteran who attended literacy classes and [was assisted through] the resume service of the Job Corps. He obtained a job as a cook at one of the local chain motels in town. After two months he moved out of the shelter into a boarding house. Last month Donald bought a moped to get to and from work, and he called us with an opening for a dishwasher at the motel where he works. He wanted us to be the first to know of this opening ... we filled the position with Johnny, another one of our homeless clients.

John is a 26-year old male who, when found at the shelter, was unemployed, drinking heavily and very depressed. He had attempted suicide and had recently been released from the hospital. ... Within a month the Job Co-op assisted John in finding the kind of job he wanted. He began attending classes regularly, and attended both AA and Mental Health meetings several times a week. He worked hard 12-hour shifts, six days a week, but never complained and still found time to attend class.

Today, one year later, John is second shift supervisor, has his own car, rents his own room furnished with the color TV he bought, has stopped drinking completely, and is one test away from the GED. John also volunteers his time at the shelter and soup kitchen, and is interested in a teacher's aide position with the AEH program after he gets his GED. His words: "I figure its important to give back to those who helped me so much."

Over 3000 learners in 24 states found or improved employment as a consequence of involvement in adult education activities. Since lack of employment is often directly connected to homelessness for many adults, securing a livelihood is considered a positive, transitional step.

Note: The actual number of students finding employment or entering training in 1991 was likely much greater than the above figures portray. Seven states, including the large states of California, Georgia, and Massachusetts, did not report data for this area of accomplishment.

QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

Fred is a mentally ill man with numerous learning disabilities. He had never learned to read. During the fall of 1991, Fred reached the beginning of the third grade level. [Project staff took him] out to lunch, and he ordered correctly from the menu and figured the tip. He bought himself a book on whales and [plans] to visit the Mystic Aquarium and see them first hand.

Improved quality of life, while elusive in definition, is considered an important indicator of positive transition. Many states reported a variety of program processes and results that, taken together, help round out the AEH story for 1991.

For Example:

- In New Hampshire 91 participants found housing, in Rhode Island five more did.
- In many states dozens of participants were removed from public assistance, thereby increasing their self esteem and saving hundreds of thousands of public dollars. In Washington state alone, 211 adults went off welfare. In New York state 111, and in Nevada 78 students made this transition.
- In Michigan, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire virtually all students developed personal education goals, many for the first time in their lives.
- Parenting skills were enhanced by many hundreds of participants in Kansas, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and West Virginia, where Family Literacy programs are emphasized.
- Other transitional accomplishments were reported by states, such as voting for the first, obtaining a drivers license, entering work experience programs, and setting life and family goals.

"It's about a lot more than learning how to construct sentences and do long division. I am learning about patience and helping others. The tools I have -- the things I'm learning about myself through my tutor-- are things I can carry into other areas of my life. Like how it's important to communicate and how sometimes you have to wait for things to go the way you want them to. You have to do the work yourself. You have to make things happen for yourself. For me, this is about communication, patience and self-respect."

(a learner in the Massachusetts project)

COORDINATION IN AEH PROGRAMS
Creative Solutions to Meet Learner Needs

Programs maximize State and community resources and provide an integrated package of support services to meet the range of learner needs through cooperative relationships with other service agencies.

For Example:

- In Arkansas, one local Vocational-Technical Center developed a diverse networking system composed of local housing authorities, Department of Human Services, counseling agencies, Mayor's offices, Sheriff's offices, the Police Department, local literacy councils, ministerial alliances, food banks, local school districts, and other organizations, in order to serve the needs of homeless learners in a five-county area. In addition to meeting regularly with the networking system, local project staff contacted civic groups, sponsored booths at county fairs and carnivals, invited speakers to classes, and developed brochures. Through this network system students often acquired employment, housing, money for rent in the period before first paychecks were received. Counseling and other immediate needs were also met through the system. The program received referrals, funds from civic and church groups, and meeting space as the program expanded. A shelter, which was initially run by volunteers, was also opened to provide emergency housing.

- In Ohio, in Pike County (rural southern Ohio), the spread-out nature of the service delivery area mandated a quite different approach tot he delivery of AEH services. In Pike County, the students are brought together at the joint vocational school for a special program, where a variety of support systems are available. Local social service agencies are able to provide transportation to bring students to the central site. There, students not

only receive traditional academic instruction, but also work on job readiness skill development, computer-assisted instruction, and receive work experience. These work experiences are in areas as varied as cafeteria service (including operating commercial cooking equipment), building maintenance, custodian services, grounds keeping, and warehouse storage.

The students also eat together and participate in a variety of group activities. This year, ten different agencies gave presentations on topics such as building self-esteem, drug and alcohol problems, family assistance and planning, and employment readiness. ... Also, a real sense of community has developed, with the students using their mechanical, carpentry, plumbing and auto repair skills to assist each other.

- In Rhode Island, through a special grant from the City of Providence substance abuse funding, educational staff at Traveler's Aid sponsored development of an improvisational play with a message against drug abuse for young people. Authors and participants were recruited from the "Learning is for Everyone" classes funded under the AEH grant and the Travelers Aid Youth Services Division. The play was performed for learners at Traveler's Aid, and in six area middle schools. The script is now used as reading material in the learning center. ...

  Thirteen persons from one local project were integrated into vocational training programs at Hanley Vocational School in Providence. Five learners were accepted into a management training program by JANCO, the parent company of the Burger King chain as part of a cooperative arrangement worked out between JANCO and the local provider.

- In Washington State, cooperative linkages with business and industry result in on-the-job-training and employment for participants with local restaurants, health care facilities, warehouses, supermarkets, and Day Labor organizations. A joint venture between Northwest Indian College, one of the State's AEH providers, and private business established a 24-hour Casino on the Lummi Indian Reservation, which now employs many participants.

RESOURCES FOR THE FIELD

Adult Learning. Special issue on Adults in Transition. May, 1993. Vol. 4, Number 5.

Developing Literacy Programs for Homeless Adults. Joye A. Norris and Paddy Kennington, Kreiger Publishing Company, Malabar, FL. 1992.

Education for Homeless Adults: Recognizing, Defining, and Responding to Needs. The State Department of Education, Bureau of Continuing Education Program Development. Anticipated date of publication Winter 1993 - Spring 1994.

It Belongs to Me. A guide to portfolio assessment in adult education programs. Hanna Arlene Fingeret, Literacy South, Durham, NC. May, 1993. Adult Education Clearinghouse, US Department of Education.

Lifeskills for the Homeless. Curriculum and materials. Janice R. Stuart. Modules available from Wake Technical Community College and NC Department of Community Colleges. 1990.

Literacy Training for the Homeless: Guidelines for Effective Programs. The University of the State of New York and the State Department of Education, Bureau of Continuing Education Program Development. 1990

Outcasts on Main Street. Report of the Federal Task Force on Homelessness and Severe Mental Illness. Interagency Council on the Homeless, Washington, DC. February, 1992.

also:

Education for Homeless Adults: The First Year. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. December, 1990.

Education for Homeless Adults: The 1989 - 1990 Report. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. October, 1992.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local programs:

- Programs should concentrate on developing quality recruitment methods to assure access to programs.
- Programs should employ systematic skills assessment during intake and post-testing during the year.
- Teachers and case managers should work as a team; neither should try to do the work of the other. A better understanding of respective roles and a clarification of team expectations and goals is necessary for a well-articulated network of services.
- Communication with support agencies, GED officials and local counselors should be continually improved, to better meet learner needs and to facilitate the tracking of student achievements.

State projects:

- Programs should consider implementing State-developed/locally-piloted and adapted AEH curricula. These materials and techniques are most responsive the needs of the AEH population.
- Programs should focus on developing or coordinating with a well-trained cadre of volunteer tutors. Volunteer components should be given priority in staff development; where possible peer tutors/mentors should be trained, to assure that the maximum number of clients can be reached.
- Programs should consider investments in new instructional technologies (laserdisc, CD-ROM, additional software purchases, etc.). Many students' motivation increases when they work on computers.
- Student evaluations of the faculty and the program are critical to insuring that the project is meeting their needs.
- Programs should consider implementing a peer evaluation process for formative and summative evaluations of individual programs and the overall service network. This process is helpful for quality management, networking and program improvement.

National Program/all levels:

- Materials dissemination/resource sharing should be made a high priority.
- Ongoing in-service training on the local level, and State-wide staff development for instructors should be an ongoing priority.
- AEH provider networks should implement campaigns for publicity and advocacy, to increase State, local and National awareness of the need for and successes of effective programs.
- Emphasis must be given to social and emotional needs as well as to outcomes related to academic growth, employment and housing. Practical, hands-on learning must be the norm. Also, socialization skills are vital gains to these learners.
- Projects should continue to give the highest priority to collaboration with other agencies and programs serving adults, to assure that homeless adults and their families have access to the widest range of services possible.

Presidential Documents

Executive Order 12848 of May 19, 1993

Federal Plan To Break the Cycle of Homelessness

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including title II of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 11311–11320), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and in order to provide for the streamlining and strengthening of the Nation's efforts to break the cycle of homelessness, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Federal member agencies acting through the Interagency Council on the Homeless, established under title II of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, shall develop a single coordinated Federal plan for breaking the cycle of existing homelessness and for preventing future homelessness.

Sec. 2. The plan shall recommend Federal administrative and legislative initiatives necessary to carry out the plan and shall include a proposed schedule for implementing administrative initiatives and transmitting any necessary legislative proposals to the Congress. These initiatives and legislative proposals shall identify ways to streamline and consolidate, when appropriate, existing programs designed to assist homeless individuals and families.

Sec. 3. The plan shall make recommendations on how current funding programs can be redirected, if necessary, to provide links between housing, support, and education services and to promote coordination and cooperation among grantees, local housing and support service providers, school districts, and advocates for homeless individuals and families. The plan shall also provide recommendations on ways to encourage and support creative approaches and cost-effective, local efforts to break the cycle of existing homelessness and prevent future homelessness, including tying current homeless assistance programs to permanent housing assistance, local housing affordability strategies, or employment opportunities.

Sec. 4. To the extent practicable, the Council shall consult with representatives of State and local governments (including education agencies), nonprofit providers of services and housing for homeless individuals and families, advocates for homeless individuals and families, currently and formerly homeless individuals and families, and other interested parties.

Sec. 5. The Council shall submit the plan to the President no later than 9 months after the date of this order.

William J. Clinton

THE WHITE HOUSE,
May 19, 1993.

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